

# Career Development Service Success Story

## Paula Eisenach



Paula Eisenach never pictured herself as a chef, but today, she's an integral part of an exciting new venture for Goodwill's Three Oaks Banquet and Conference Center.

Paula is one of the chefs who helps to create Goodwill's "Great Bakes" cookies and brownies.



In 1988, Paula was diagnosed with an Ependymoma, a malignant tumor in her cerebellum, brain stem, and spine. Her 20-year journey has required her to undergo seven major surgeries, endure numerous sessions of radiation therapy, and experience two recurrences.

Surviving brain cancer and the subsequent treatments have taken a toll on Paula. Her ability to hear is reduced, and she has a slight paralysis of her left side and larynx. She also walks with a cane because of an ataxic gait.

A licensed realtor, Paula's career stalled when the housing slump hit Southwest Florida. Searching for a suitable job on her own proved to be fruitless, so she turned to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and eventually to Goodwill Industries of Southwest Florida.

Employment Consultant Enas Bendeck diligently tried to find part-time work for Paula, but it was difficult to find a position close to Paula's home in Bonita Springs. Paula says, "She contacted me one day and asked me how I felt about baking brownies." Baking and cooking had always just been a hobby for Paula, but the idea piqued her interest: "I thought, 'why not?'"

For the last two months, Paula has worked as the assistant to Three Oaks Executive Chef Scott Van Aken. Paula helps Scott to bake, slice, and package Goodwill's "Great Bakes," and she's thoroughly enjoying it. "We seem to be a big hit," she explains, "our wares are just flying off the shelves."

While Paula's career aspirations go far beyond the kitchen, she's having a lot of fun baking Goodwill goodies. "I love working with Scott," Paula explains. "He's a fantastic chef and baker. And we have the same great taste in music. With his collection of CDs and mine, we have a jam session going on in the kitchen most of the time."

Paula obviously knows how to enjoy her work, but she also takes her position and her responsibilities as a Goodwill employee seriously. "Our goal is to keep growing and refining our technique," says Paula, "thereby being able to generate as much profit as possible for Goodwill Industries' multiple charitable endeavors."

Paula's success story goes far beyond her recovery from brain cancer. Paula embodies the spirit of Goodwill: A cycle of giving that both begins and ends with the people that Goodwill assists.

